

DNREC, FEMA to sponsor open house May 23 in New Castle on preliminary flood risk maps for parts of New Castle County

DOVER – DNREC's Division of Watershed Stewardship and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will hold an open house Tuesday, May 23 about new preliminary flood insurance rate maps for parts of New Castle County. The open house will be held at the William Penn High School at 713 E. Basin Road, New Castle, DE 19720 from 4 – 7 p.m. The public is encouraged to attend to learn more about proposed flood risk map changes and to understand better how proposed map changes affect their property.

A cooperating technical partnership between the Division of Watershed Stewardship and FEMA aims to improve the accuracy of flood risk maps statewide. New preliminary flood risk maps for portions of New Castle County were released in December 2016. To get data for the preliminary flood risk maps, DNREC did hydrologic studies that determine water flows during flood events, base flood elevations and more accurate floodplain boundaries using newer elevation contours on about 150 miles of streams in New Castle County. The results enabled FEMA's maps to show base flood elevations for many areas for the first time, providing property owners with more detailed and accurate flood risk assessments.

FEMA's flood risk maps are used by insurance companies to establish insurance rates and by local communities to enforce local floodplain codes. Many communities have recently amended local codes to adopt higher floodplain development standards,

in conjunction with the release of the new flood risk maps. Many of these higher standards – such as first-floor freeboard (building living space to a margin of safety above predicted flood levels), limiting development in floodplains, and flood resistant foundation designs – were recommended by the Floodplain and Drainage Advisory Committee formed as a result of Delaware Senate Bill 64 passed in 2011 to support more effective floodplain management standards.

FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program makes flood insurance available to local property owners. Mortgage lenders require borrowers whose properties are located in a designated special flood hazard area to purchase flood insurance as a condition of receiving a federally-backed mortgage loan in accordance with the Federal Disaster Protection Act of 1973. Standard homeowners insurance does not cover damage caused by flooding, but all property owners and renters can purchase flood insurance. Homeowners interested in how the proposed changes could impact the cost of their flood insurance premium should contact their insurance agent.

Preliminary flood risk maps, as well as current maps, can be viewed at www.de.gov/floodplanning. For more information on flood risk maps, please contact Greg Williams or Michael Powell, Division of Watershed Stewardship, 302-739-9921. For information on the DNREC's flood mitigation program, visit DNREC's website at <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/swc/Drainage/Pages/Flooding.aspx>.

Media contact: Michael Globetti, DNREC Public Affairs
302-739-9902

Vol. 47, No. 104